

ATCM First Impressions Visit

Sample Report

Expectations

The visiting team's perception of the town was that it would be a quiet retailing area with little commercial activity on a mid week morning/afternoon.

There was a belief that there would be several empty units with a limited selection of stores.

Initial impressions

Travelling from our town by car and entering the town centre was quite a pleasant experience. The town centre was well signed and the roads were free from congestion and overall had a clean fresh appearance. Coleraine has a one way system which did not appear to be too complicated and luckily one wrong direction could be corrected with a second time around the block. The town had an 'independent' and unique feel and a character that felt cosy, friendly and inviting. The overriding impression was that the town centre was very clean.

Overall appearance

Overall appearance was positive. The newly installed public realm was particularly impressive (please see the below images for specific comments). Very impressed with Coleraine town and centre and would definitely suggest a visit to friends and family. Some nice pieces of public realm (particularly use of squares, open spaces and seating).

There was also a noticeable lack of litter, detritus, cigarette litter, graffiti and fly posting. It was virtually non existent.

Drive about Section

Entering the town was pleasant with well kept roundabouts and excellent directional signage. As the main street is pedestrianised traffic is circulated through the one way system around this main shopping area. Driving along the river was very pleasant with a clean well kept appeal to the whole area. The main shopping destinations blended nicely into the streetscape. There appeared to be plenty of street level parking and at 90p for six hours the stay was not going to be time constrained!

The pedestrian/delivery access signage questionable - times for unloading not pedestrian friendly (see below image). Spelling error on signage.

Town Gateways (signage, beautification efforts etc.)

Impressive tourist blades in the town centre signposting to all relevant locations. Good use of floral displays throughout town centre.
Lamppost banners tasteful and appropriate for branding of Coleraine town centre.
The festive features are still on lampposts throughout the town centre.
Nicely maintained and uniformed shop frontages in some areas of the town adds to the feel that the area is warm, friendly and bespoke (see below image of Oxfam/Heart Foundation).

Main shopping area appearance

Not much evidence of empty units in the town centre (those that were vacant were appropriately noticed with management agent's details). Empty site facing entrance to shopping Centre could benefit from being fenced off by hoarding (litter behind wire fencing was visible).

Industrial area appearance

N/A - only inspected town centre.

Walking Tour Section

Physical State of business

Our party initiated its walk from the train and bus station which looks recently restored, a nice entrance/arrival point to the town. The short walk along Railway Road as a periphery to the main shopping areas was a good opening to the town. This area was litter free with a nice variety of shops complimenting the leisure centre. This was reciprocated by businesses in that all stores had clean and tidy facades with no noticeable damage.

Range of businesses

Good range and diversity of business type.
Significant and appropriate mix of independent/multiple.

People factor

Customer service was excellent in each retail outlet visited. Staff in stores were friendly, helpful and appropriately attentive.

Public Toilets

Public toilets were not obvious to the visiting team. The only noticeable facilities were in the Shopping Centre.

Parking

Car parking

There appeared to be plenty of street level parking in/around the shopping centre. The car park at 90p for six hours ensured that the stay was not going to be time constrained.

Actor Section

Tourist / Visitor

A quick visit to the TI office provided a shopping guide for the town (good mix of independent/multiple). The staff members provided a map and directions around the town. There did not appear to be any further visitor attractions apart from the church in the main street which was not open to visitors during our visit.

Understandably, the emphasis in most available literature/guides was for the coast.

Potential Resident/retiree

N/A

Potential Business Operator

A few empty units available with contact details for management agents.

Overall Feelings

Overall 'gut feeling'

The visit to the town was pleasant and enjoyable.
Good mix of independent/multiple retailers.
Attractive public realm.
Members of the visiting team would happily return and particularly recommend shopping.

6 most positive features

1. Appearance – the cobbled pedestrian shopping area and new public realm (specifically seating).
2. Cleanliness – very little rubbish/detritus/flyposting, only noticeable issue was chewing gum.
3. Street Furniture – flower beds/lampposts/directional signage/artistic seating areas.
4. Amenities – everything in close proximity we noted leisure centre/library/shopping/rail and bus travel/parking etc.
5. Friendliness – staff in all the shops and leisure places.
6. Signage – excellent signage both in the centre and throughout the town.

Ideas to 'steal'

Uniformed painting of utility boxes (to redress flyposting/graffiti occurrences and create uniformity despite multi agency ownership).
Styles of seating in pedestrianised areas and public areas.

Key Areas for attention

Removal of Christmas decorations from town centre and Shopping Centre.
Utilising the waterfront along the river (although this is a longterm strategy).

Greatest impact positive /negative

Greatest positive impact was the newly installed public realm and use of open public spaces.
It is fair to say that there was no negative impact on our visit.
Extremely clean town centre.

Supporting Images



Newly paved pedestrianised public realm



Open and accessible public space outside Town Hall



Attractive planter/seating area



Uniformed and attractive shop frontage



Newly renovated public realm and attractive tourist blades



Utility boxes, street lighting, bollards and tree guards painted in same colour
(despite different agency ownership)



Attractive and interesting seating



Access times in Pedestrianised area not pedestrian friendly. Spelling error.



Attractive banners on lampposts